

NEWS *from*



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LACK OF I-15 FIRE/EMERGENCY RESPONSE ABILITY CONCERNS SUPERVISORS

- ***Board Donates Fire Engine to Baker Community Services District***
- ***County Fire Presence Shifts 42 Miles from Baker to Harvard Wednesday***
- ***Closure of Baker Prison, Las Vegas Trauma Center Adds to Problems***

SAN BERNARDINO -- The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors today donated a surplus fire engine as part of an effort to assist the Baker Community Services District with local fire protection efforts.

During May the District requested that an engine be donated in preparation for the impending re-location of County Fire Department assets from Baker to the Harvard Station, and to assist the Baker district in fulfilling its fire service responsibilities. The re-location of the County Fire presence has been necessitated largely by a lack of property tax revenues to fund fire and emergency services along Interstate 15, said Assistant County Fire Chief Dan Wurl.

In recent years the number of emergency responses from Baker to outlying areas including Interstate 15 has climbed to more than 900 annually.

Compounding the funding problem was the recent closure of a privately operated state correctional facility at Baker that had provided a four-man crew of volunteer firefighters to assist a county fire captain in responding to calls in Baker and surrounding areas.

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BAKER FIRE 2-2-2-2

Chief Wurl told the Board of Supervisors today that his Department developed a plan to assist the community of Baker in developing and providing fire services within its one-square-mile fire jurisdictional area. To date, assistance to the District has included the following:

| <u>Assistance</u> | <u>Approx. Value</u> |
|---|----------------------|
| Donating surplus fire engine (July 9, 2002) | \$2,000 |
| Temporary communications services at no cost | \$1,500 |
| Use of safety clothing | \$3,000 |
| Coordinating/assisting in response to all fires, hazmat, and traffic collisions requiring extrication | undetermined |
| Assistance with training PCF company | \$3,000 (annually) |
| Five County "900" pagers | \$1,000 |
| Two SCBA Facemasks | \$1,000 |

"Since we have been unable to renew interest within the state to renew our ability to use volunteers from the state prison, we needed to figure out how to deal with delivery of service there," Wurl said. "We want to make sure the community of Baker knows it's not our intention to abandon them. We agreed to donate a surplus fire engine and to provide a pay-call captain to help them train their volunteers. In return, the CSD will allow us to use water along the interstate and to house a water tender."

Supervisor Postmus took the liberty of deferring today's fire engine donation from the Board of Supervisors Consent Calendar to the Discussion Calendar in order to update the Board and the public on the urgency of the situation at Baker.

"We needed to take this opportunity to remind people that as of tomorrow County Fire response to Baker will come from the Harvard Fire Station, 42 miles away," Postmus said. "This is a very undesirable situation but one we cannot avoid. With all of the federal lands out there we just don't have a tax base to adequately fund fire and emergency services. We have been working with state and federal officials to try to get additional funds to address this interstate problem."

Explained Chief Wurl: "Tomorrow morning at 8 a.m. we're pulling our fire engine and patrol unit out of Baker and re-locating them to Harvard. This will result in response times of up to an hour and a half from Harvard to the state line—some 90 miles. Unfortunately we have no other choice."

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BAKER FIRE
3-3-3-3

Wurl voiced another concern resulting from the closure last week of a trauma center in Las Vegas that had been used extensively to treat accident victims transported by helicopter from the Interstate. "We will have problems out on I-15 when we get on scene after a delayed response and we will have to transport patients to Loma Linda."

Supervisor Dennis Hansberger agreed that the trauma center closure is a serious problem for San Bernardino County because it has already resulted in additional patients arriving from Nevada for trauma treatment at Loma Linda University Medical Center.